

MINUTES  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY  
AUGUST 7, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.  
IN THE JONATHAN FELTON COMMISSIONERS ROOM  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING  
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

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1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN LEONARD WIGGINS AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Leonard Wiggins, Chairman, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Viola Harris, Mr. George Thorne, Mr. Ralph Webb and Mrs. Evelyn Powell.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Donald Boswell.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Eric Evans, County Manager, Mrs. Natalie Bess, Deputy County Manager, Mr. Michael Peters, County Attorney and Ms. Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS.

Safety instructions provided by Mrs. Bess.

3. PRAYER.

Prayer provided by Rev. Hines.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the June 28, 2023 and July 3, 2023 meetings as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to receive citizens input relative to a possible application to the NC Department of Commerce for the CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Mr. Peters read the public notice.

Mr. Evans stated that the Rural Economic Development Division of the NC Department of Commerce will announce the availability of Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization (CDBG-NR) funds for activities within the County later this fall. The program is centered around renovation and replacement of substandard housing for low-moderate income families, and most of the funding must be used for low-to-moderate income, owner-occupied housing.

Program funds can be used to:

- Address housing and other public utility, street and drainage conditions within a neighborhood, on a scattered site basis, or for emergency housing repairs;
- Construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or installation of public facilities in support of housing, or improvement, or removal of architectural barriers to promote energy efficiency;
- Senior and community/neighborhood/recreational center, parks and playgrounds;
- Shelter for persons having special needs such as shelters for the homeless, convalescent homes, hospitals, nursing homes, battered spouse shelters, half-way houses for runaway children, drug offenders or parolees, group homes for the mentally challenged/disabled, and temporary housing for persons;

- Water/sewer connections for LMI persons to lines not constructed with CDBG funds; and
- Emergency Housing Repairs

The maximum grant request is yet to be determined. The program does not require a local match; however, some level of local funding may help the application score higher. We must conduct two public hearings prior to the submission of an application. Tonight's hearing is the first, and the purpose is to receive public comment about possible application activities. During the second, we will explain to the public the contents if the proposed application after approval by the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comments. There being none the public hearing was adjourned.

Rev. Hines moved to call for a second public hearing to be held at the September 5, 2023 meeting. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

6. **SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT(S):**

A. **Tarasa Lewis, Tax Administrator, presented the 2022 Annual Settlement.**

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the resolution approving the Annual Tax Settlement as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Thorne moved to approve the resolution to recharge the Tax Collector with collecting taxes for years 2013 through 2023. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. **Introduction of Payden Kiser, 4-H delegate to attend the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Fall Conference.**

Mrs. Tanya Heath, Cooperative Extension Director, introduced Mr. Kiser.

C. **David Webb, Regional Director for the Office of Congressman Don Davis, provided an update.**

Presentation to be made upon the arrival of Mr. Webb.

7. **PUBLIC PETITIONS.**

Mrs. Kathy Williams, 2208 Robin Drive, Tarboro, stated that the County's new Vision Statement is "Edgecombe County is a historic place that values its citizens and natural resources and creates opportunities where people are proud to live, work and play for generations to come." She stated that she disagrees. She has lived in Edgecombe County her entire life and she has never considered leaving as much as she has in the last few months and she is actively looking for housing outside of the County. Mrs. Williams stated that she is tired of paying outrageous taxes and sees nothing for it. The Sheriff's Office has to beg for vehicles. We have been begging for a shelter for years. We have duplicate facilities in Tarboro and Rocky Mount. She stated that nobody understands the numbers of dogs, puppies, cats and kittens that are dying. Animal euthanasia is killing and animal humanely, most commonly with injectable drugs. This year 330 dogs and cats have been euthanized at the shelter, a 46% euthanasia rate. We had it down to less than 20%. She stated that in May the shelter closed for two weeks to have the floors sealed and the walls painted, but it was not done correctly. The sealing has been torn up already and the paint is coming up all ready. Mrs. Williams stated that she is severely disappointed and provided pictures to the Board.

Dr. Tracy Phillips, 1109 US Highway 301, Whitakers, stated that the County Board's conduct has been nothing short of a disappointment. With abdication, desertion and malfeasance leading to a dereliction of their duty as responsible stewards of our resources. This outrageous and unacceptable performance is now public knowledge apparent to all except those who turn a blind eye to the truth or recklessly ignore the consequences of their

actions. Such behavior cannot go unpunished. Those who act in this manner must face the consequences. The State auditors' recent report revealed clear red flags about the Board and the County Manager's performance. Gross mismanagement and a failure to lead by example have eroded the trust of those who rely on the County Manager's guidance. This hypocrisy undermines the very essence of leadership that should be earned through accountability and transparency. There has been a failure in fiduciary duty to provide adequate oversight and accountability of the County's resources. Repeated failure to reconcile bank accounts, late penalties and inaccurate payrolls have resulted in the wastage of valuable resources that should be utilized for the betterment of the citizens in this County. The lack of due diligence from both the Board and the County Management is an embarrassment. Matters that are material to accountability have been overlooked and a lack of monitoring or reporting has led to a delegation of financial management responsibilities without any sense of responsibility. Most concerning of all is the overall failure to communicate effectively with the citizens of this County. Central information has not been shared transparently leading to a lack of trust and high rates of staff turnover. Toxic leadership, abuse of authority and a disregard for the community's voices have created an atmosphere of mistrust and dissatisfaction. The consequences of this lack of accountability are evident. Our chief administrator seems disconnected from the realities at hand. Displaying poor judgement and ineffective oversight of labor and resources. We cannot afford to have a leader incapable of meeting the challenges that lie ahead. She stated that in light of these alarming circumstances, she earnestly calls upon the Board to do the honorable thing and demand the immediate resignation of the County Manager. Our County deserves better and we stand at a pivotal crossroad. A moment that will determine the future and fate of Edgecombe County. The choice is clear, we can either continue with the leadership that has left us at the bottom in health, housing and education or we can embrace a new path of accountability, transparency and good governance. Something that propels our County forward. We demand the change. We deserve it and we are holding you responsible for your neglectful actions and you need to be held accountable. We deserve as a citizen of this County nothing less.

Mr. Roger Savain 1109 US Highway 301, Whitakers, stated that in reviewing the budget we have a debt service for a \$3 million principal and we have budgeted for the interest on it, which seems to be 19 percent interest a year. It is such a high interest rate on that particular amount of money. It is either the bankers are making really a good deal for somebody else. Is that a way we are apportioning money at a different time for other reasons. Mr. Savain stated that the principal on the school is \$658,000 and the interest on that is 11%. He stated that he attended the meeting of the manager and he mentioned that fact that you were hiring a new person to be responsible for coordinating unemployment to employers in the County. The amount was like 1300 unemployed and there are about 1600 jobs. He stated that he researched and found out that we already have people doing that, an office dedicated to that in this County that has four professionals in it at the Edgecombe County Community College. Mr. Savain stated that when he spoke to the head of the department he was flabbergasted. He did not understand why in the world did we need to hire somebody else to do his job. He can adjust the focus to resolve some of the issues that the County was to address, but this is a matter of wasted money. He asked that they take that in consideration and make necessary adjustments.

Mr. John Walker, 1303 N. Main Street, Tarboro, (Editor of My Tarboro Today digital newspaper), raised the question about leasing versus borrowing money on vehicles. Conversation came up prior to the budget. It came up before the budget was voted on. We still have not gotten anything, but one of the explanations was that one company was talked to rather than Enterprise because Enterprise wanted the entire County's business and not just the Sheriff's Office. He asked what was wrong with that. He has sat in meetings before where we have talked about trying to find mechanics to work on the vehicles, having trouble finding decent mechanics. We talked about a lot back over where we could build a shop. Why not go with the company that would take your vehicles and have a management program for all of the vehicles in the County. That takes it off of the department head and allows them to do the job that they are supposed to do. Mr. Walker stated that Mrs. Harris

asked that question before. She did not understand that we did not have a vehicle maintenance plan. That is prudent spending of taxpayer money. He stated that he does not know what the interest rate is at Southern Bank, but if we can better deal with Enterprise and if they want all of our vehicles and they want to do a vehicle maintenance plan and the Sheriff's Office has a vehicle that has 150,000 miles, we are going to know that 50,000 miles ago they came and got that vehicle and they have better set of wheels. We have got to do a better job of spending our money. You all are on a fixed income because we can only give you so much. We are already at .95 cents.

Mr. Curmilus Dancy, 127 Midway Lane, Tarboro, P O Box 1391, Pinetops, stated that he echoed what the Animal Control committee member, Kathy Williams, stated about animal control. He stated that being on that committee, and he did know where they are at now because they have not had a couple of meetings. He stated that he will be glad when the committee gets back on it and move forward so they can do something about a new animal shelter. Mr. Dancy stated that it is embarrassing to him to look at in the parking lot at an event he videoed and see this old Explorer belonging to the Sheriff's Office. He stated that our County has these old vehicles, and we need some new vehicles and he hopes to see some new vehicles next year because the officers need to be able to make it to a call and make it back home.

Mr. Wiggins stated that we have a seven-member board and it takes four members of the Board to approve of anything that comes out of the budget and some of the projects being talked about we have been working on some length of time. We have a fixed income and it has to be spread around and we make those decisions on where we are going to spread it. Every department head request more money and we have to make decisions on how we are going to fund them. Mr. Wiggins stated that the one comment about the Manager, oversight is his responsibility along with that of department heads. You cannot fix things that do not get to you. He stated that he has been around Edgecombe government for 24 years and he certainly gives the Manager full confidence in terms of his ability to do his job. Mr. Wiggins stated that if he has anything to do with it the Manager will stay here as long as he stays here. He stated that we do value citizen comments and if we get them more often, whether they are against government or supportive. We do a lot of things that we like to hear that we do well. Sometimes the Board is privileged to have an agenda package that will contain more facts than you as citizens get and those are the things that we deal with. We are working on that shelter and feel close. We will continue to do things according to the budget that we have.

Mrs. Harris stated that she understands our citizens feelings and as County Commissioner she shares those feelings. During 2020 and 2021 we were in a pandemic and a lot of people were not working full-time inside the building, which allowed a lot of things to not happen as they should have happened. Our finance department has had to be completely revamped. We found out during that time that we had people who were unexperienced, unable to do the job at hand. We took precautions and 2021 is gone and now we have to start on where we are now. That department does not look like it used to look. We have made sure that we hired people with experience. We have made sure that we put money in the budget so we can get the best, because we understand finances is at the top priority of any county. We have to make sure that everything that we are supposed to take care of is taken care of. Mrs. Harris stated that County Commissioners pay taxes too, so of course we got upset when we saw the report. We also had the opportunity to look in that report and see that the auditor did not have some things quite right. You cannot believe everything that you read. She stated that she worked in the newspaper business for 15 years. You have to remember who is doing the report. You have to remember before you take the blank out of my eye you need to take it out of your own. This Board has come down and made sure that there are processes in place so that what has happened does not happen again. We are not the kind to close our eyes to anything, even when it comes down to our Manager. He has been told. He has been shown, but remember he is a man just like the rest of us. In 2021 he had his hands full just like everybody else. Right now, we believe that we are in a good place. The gentleman mentioned about the people at Edgecombe

Community College, Dr. McLeod, who is President of the College, is working with our Manager on that specific job to include it with what he has, because what he has is dealing with education and work. We have to remember that everybody is not going to Edgecombe Community College. Everybody is not going to college period. We are trying to get people to work who want to work with their hands, people that can work with their minds, there are jobs out there. Mrs. Harris stated that after 22 years of serving this County she was disappointed and she was one of the first ones to let him know she was not satisfied. We are all human. Mistakes have been made, but we have put things in place to make sure that we are at the best that we can be for right now in 2023-2024 moving forward.

**SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT.**

Mr. David Webb, with the Office of Congressman Don Davis, presented on:

- Congressional Casework
- Constituent Outreach
- Congressional Educational Opportunities for Youth
- Commendations and Greetings
- Flag Requests
- Federal Grant Assistance
- Constituent Representation in Congress
- Legislative Updates
- Appropriations and Community Project Funding Update
- Congressman Don Davis highlights remarkable achievements on the House Floor

**8. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**A. Approval to ratify previous Board action to accept additional grant funds for Water and Sewer District 6 Infrastructure project.**

Mr. Evans stated that we received notice of additional grant funding available from USDA-Rural Development for our infrastructure project in Water/Sewer District 6 in the amount of \$2,327,000. Since USDA had to get those funds obligated before August 4<sup>th</sup>, the Board called a special meeting for August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2:00 p.m. However, because of some unexpected and urgent family and health emergencies and obligations, only three members of the Board were present at 2:00 p.m. for the special meeting. After consulting with USDA, it was clear that to avoid losing \$2,327,000 of USDA grant funds, it was necessary for the Board to immediately consider the grant amendment without delay that would be caused by calling for a later special meeting. Therefore, the Board called an emergency meeting for August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00 p.m. to approve the grant amendment. The emergency meeting was held on Tuesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4 p.m., a quorum was present, and the Board properly considered and approved the grant amendment in time to secure the grant funding. Event though the meeting was properly called, and a quorum was present which unanimously approved the action, it is important to be transparent with our citizens. Therefore, to show clear support for the acceptance of those grant funds in a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board, he recommended that the Board convene as the Governing Board for Water and Sewer District, and then ratify the Board's previous actin to approve Amendment No. 2 to the Letter of Conditions for the USDA-Rural Development Grant for Water and Sewer District 6, increasing the grant by the amount of \$2,327,000.

Mrs. Powell moved to recess the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners and convene as Governing Body of Water and Sewer District 6. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Harris moved to ratify the previous action by the Board to approve Amendment No. 2 to the Letter of Conditions for the USDA-Rural Development Grant for Water and Sewer District 6, increasing the grant by the amount of \$2,327,000 as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Powell moved to adjourn as Governing Body of Water and Sewer District 6 and

reconvene regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**B. Approval of budget amendments.**

Mrs. Harris moved to approve budget amendments 1-6b as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**C. Approval of Assistance Policy and Procurement/Disbursement policy for the Urgent Repair Program.**

Mr. Evans stated that Edgecombe County has been awarded \$76,000 by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) under the 2023 cycle of the Urgent Repair Program (URP). The goal of the project is to assist at least 5 very-low and low-income families with special needs in addressing housing conditions that pose imminent threats to their life and/or safety or to provide accessibility modifications and other repairs necessary to prevent displacement. NCHFA requires that we adopt an Assistance Policy and Procurement/Disbursement Policy before a Funding Agreement is issued.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the policies as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**D. Approval of job descriptions for newly created positions.**

Mr. Evans stated that the FY-24 budget includes funding for the following new positions.

- Career Navigator (grade 22)
- Parks and Recreation Director (grade 23)
- Attorney-Social Services (grade 25)

The budget also includes adding back the Delinquent Tax Specialist position, which was previously on our pay plan. That is added on grade 12.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the job descriptions as presented, as well as the revised Pay Plan that includes them at the grades stated. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5 for and 1 opposing. Mr. Thorne opposed.

**E. Approval of Sole Sourcing of Water Meters.**

Mr. Evans presented for Board consideration a quote to upgrade the water meter reading system utilized by the Utilities Department, along with purchasing new water meters and associated appurtenances to replace water meters within several districts. The Edgecombe County Utilities Department utilizes Neptune Water Meters to monitor water usage throughout Districts 1-5. However, District 6 (Town of Princeville) utilizes a Badger Meter system that was inherited at the time Edgecombe County took over ownership of the Town of Princeville's Water & Sewer System, which currently leaves the Utility Department operating two separate meter reading systems. Currently the Badger reading system and water meters are in desperate need of replacement, therefore, it is much easier to convert the entire Badger System to the Neptune System. According to our Financial Policy, under "Competitive Bidding", when goods or services are only available from a single source, those items can be purchased through Sole Sourcing" but must be approved by the governing board prior to purchase.

Mr. Thorne moved to approve the quote as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**F. Approval of Resolution to Appropriate Additional Opioid Settlement Funds.**

Mr. Evans stated that counties are receiving additional funds from a second opioid settlement with five pharmacies, referred to as the second wave. The distribution process mirrors the original settlement agreement with counties. We have already received the first allocation of \$64,714.67. Mr. Evans presented to the Board for consideration a resolution to update our appropriation from both settlements. The

total amount includes the first two allocations from the first settlement wave, the amount received from the second wave, and the anticipated amount to be allocated later this fiscal year.

Mr. Webb moved to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**G. Approval of amendments to correct and update ordinances for Solid Waste and Water/Sewer.**

Mr. Evans presented for Board consideration Amendment No. 1 to the Solid Waste Ordinance, originally adopted June 28, 2023 as part of the Budget Adoption. The purpose of the Amendment is to make corrections and additions to the Solid Waste Fee Schedule for FY-24.

Mr. Michael Matthews, Assistant County Manager, stated that one of the changes is Construction and Demolition, which was supposed to go from \$50 per ton to \$55. Yard Waste was at \$44.50, which should be \$46 per ton. He stated that the scrap tire disposal fee was left out at \$90 per ton.

Mr. Powell moved to approve the amendment as presented. Mr. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Evans presented for Board consideration Amendment No. 1 to the Water and Sewer Operations Ordinance, originally adopted June 28, 2023 as part of the Budget Adoption. The purpose of this Amendment is to make corrections to the Water and Sewer Fee Schedule for FY-24.

Mr. Matthews stated that the residential and commercial fees needs to be corrected. The first 5,000 gallons is \$7 per gallon, which is correct, but from there on it should have been \$7.50 and \$8.25

Mr. Webb moved to approve the amendment as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA:**

**I. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. Approval of Ambulance Franchise Agreement for Coastal Medical Transport, Inc.**

Mr. Evans stated that Coastal Medical Transport, Inc. has submitted a franchise agreement to provide ambulance transportation in Edgecombe County. Edgecombe County citizens could benefit from having Coastal Medical Transport, Inc. as a non-emergency ambulance transportation servicer to help meet the high demand of transporting our bed confined patients to in and out of county doctor's appointment, local hospital discharges, and routine recurring care appointments such as dialysis. Currently, Edgecombe County EMS non-emergency division is maximizing all opportunities to transport patients. However, the demand is now beyond our capability to manage considering:

- Prioritization of 911/emergency calls for service
- Prioritization of recurring dialysis non-emergency transports
- Inability to staff non-emergency transport units due to profession demand.

Mr. Harris moved to approve the Ambulance Franchise Agreement for Coastal Medical Transport, Inc. as recommended. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**9. APPOINTMENTS:**

**A. Edgecombe County ABC Board.**

Mrs. Powell moved to reappoint Mr. Calvin Wiggins as recommended. Rev. Hines

seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

10. **AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.**

Mr. Thorne moved to approve the afterlists and releases as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

11. **CONTRACTS FOR REVIEW AND/OR APPROVAL.**

Mr. Webb moved to approve the contracts as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

12. **DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW.**\*\*\*Received\*\*\*

- A. Water and Sewer update.
- B. Monthly Financial Summary.
- C. Solid Waste reports.
- D. Emergency Management – Tornado damage overview and update.

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Mr. Antwan Brown, Emergency Services Director, provided an update on the July 19, 2023 tornado that touched down in the County.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Resolution Requesting Funding to Address Unmet Needs After Tornado Damage in Edgecombe County. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

13. **MANAGER'S REPORT.**\*\*\*Received\*\*\*

- A. Workforce Development Indicators.
- B. TDA financial report.
- C. Update on Countyline Merger.
- D. Update on Broadband Project.
- E. Tailored Plan Launch Delay.
- F. Grand Re-opening of the Rocky Mount Health Department office on August 14<sup>th</sup>.
- G. Inspection report for Volunteer Fire Departments.
- H. Update on Get Off the List initiative.

14. **COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.**

Mrs. Harris shared information she received while attending the NACo Conference.

- How counties are getting creative to meet housing needs for the homeless
- Edgecombe is not the only one who cannot find people to work in DSS and the Health Department. It is all across the country.
- Crisis in America on civility – how we talk to one another, how we treat each other. That goes for citizens as well as elected officials to be civil to one another.
- Mental Health Summit: Coming out of pandemic and a lot of our employees and family members have not addressed the mental drain that the pandemic had on all of us. We need to make sure that we are keeping up with the mental health or our employees and our families.

Mr. Thorne, speaking to the citizen comment about the leasing of the vehicles, stated that that meeting is actually going to happen on August 11<sup>th</sup>, but for reiteration, he asked the Board at the May meeting to have support to have that by the budget. We still do not have it and this is the fourth meeting in a row that he has asked to have information on leasing of vehicles that was supposed to be presented back in May.

15. **ATTORNEY'S REPORT.**

None.

16. **CLOSED SESSION.**

Rev. Hines moved to go into closed session to discuss:

- A. Economic Development. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(4)]

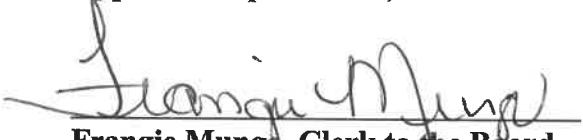
Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.



Rev. Hines moved to go out of closed session and resume the regular meeting. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

17. **REV. HINES MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. MRS. POWELL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.**

Approved September 5, 2023.

  
Frankie Mungo, Clerk to the Board